Amphibians at Fort Pickett

The three pictures above (eggs, hatching eggs, & larvae) represent the life phases of the spotted salamander, *Ambystoma maculatum.* The adult is pictured in the center of the poster.

Life History

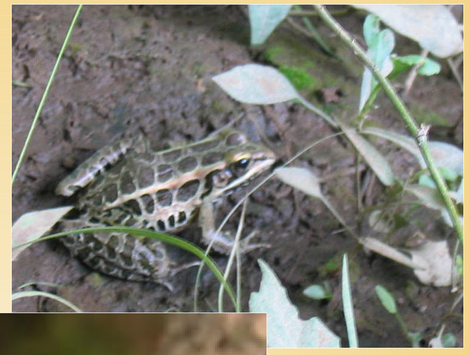
The name amphibian means "**double life**", and is given to members of this group for the double life that they lead. Most adult amphibians usually live on land, however, their soft eggs must be laid in the water. Young amphibians called **“larvae”** spend their early years in the water, breathing through gills in the side of their head in much the same way as fish do. In many ways they resemble fish more than they resemble their parents, for at first, they have no legs, and swim by wriggling their tail. As they mature, amphibians will usually lose their gills and develop legs.

Most amphibians have soft skin which easily absorbs water. This puts them in very close contact with their surroundings. It also makes them particularly susceptible to certain man-made toxins and pollutants. This may be why the number of amphibian species, and the size of many amphibian populations, has been declining in recent years. Amphibians, are excellent indicators of environmental health and may be among the first organisms to suffer from the effects of global pollution and climate change thus providing an early warning of environmental degradation.

Size can be deceiving. The Northern cricket frog, *Acris crepitans* (above and right) is one of the smallest frogs on Fort Pickett, as demonstrated by the full grown adult on the biologists finger.

Spotted Salamander *Ambystoma maculatum*

Cryptic coloration, also known as camouflage, allows an organism to match its background and hence become less vulnerable to predation or recognition by prey. The Northern cricket frog, *Acris crepitans* displays such coloration. The brown phase is pictured above and the green phase below left.



The Pickerel frog, *Rana palustris* (above) and the American toad, *Bufo americanus* (left) are two commonly encountered Anurans on Fort Pickett.

List of all amphibian species documented on ARNG-MTC Fort Pickett.

Scientific Name	Common Name
Salamanders	
Notophthalmus v. viridescens	Newt, red-spotted
Necturus punctatus	Waterdog, dwarf
Ambystoma maculatum	Salamander, spotted
Ambystoma opacum	Salamander, marbled
Desmognathus fuscus	Salamander, northern dusky
Eurycea bislineata cirrigera	Salamander, southern two-lined
Eurycea guttolineata	Salamander, three-lined
Hemidactylium scutatum	Salamander, four-toed
*Plethodon glutinosus**	Salamander, slimy
*Plethodon chlorobryonis**	Salamander, Atlantic Coast slimy
Pseudotriton r. ruber	Salamander, northern red
Frogs & Toads	
Bufo americanus	Toad, American
Bufo fowleri	Toad, Fowler's
Acris c. crepitans	Frog, eastern cricket (northern)
Hyla chrysoscelis	Treefrog, Cope's gray
Hyla versicolor	Treefrog, gray
Pseudacris c. crucifer	Peeper, northern spring
Pseudacris f. feriarum	Frog, southeastern chorus
Rana catesbeiana	Bullfrog
Rana clamitans melanota	Frog, northern green
Rana palustris	Frog, pickerel
Rana sphenocephala	Frog, southern leopard
Gastrophryne carolinensis	Toad, eastern narrow-mouthed

Conservation Management Institute

All Photos by Michael St. Germain except *Bufo Americanus* by Charles Warren

Virginia Tech and Fort Pickett biologists surveying for aquatic and terrestrial amphibians at Fort Pickett.